

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE B-14

NEW YORK TIMES
26 APRIL 1982

Pentagon Aide Faces Ouster Over Disclosures

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 25 — The Reagan Administration has begun proceedings to dismiss a Pentagon official who is accused of unauthorized disclosure of secret information to Congressional officials and the news media, according to Administration officials.

John C. F. Tillson, director of manpower management in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, has received notice of plans to dismiss him, according to the officials. They said the notice was sent by his immediate superior, Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence J. Korb.

Mr. Tillson has been charged with disclosing official information to unauthorized persons, including five Congressional staff aides and a former Pentagon official, and with having disclosed classified, including top secret, information to unauthorized persons, evidently including reporters.

A spokesman for the Defense Department, Henry E. Catto Jr., declined to comment on the case, saying that it was still under investigation. It was unclear whether others would also be accused.

Mr. Tillson's attorney, James H. Heller, said in a telephone interview that his client had denied the charges in writing and orally and planned to fight the dismissal move.

The case dates to January when staff aides in the Pentagon told senior officials in a highly confidential briefing that it might cost up to \$750 billion more than the \$1,600 billion planned over the next five years for the armed forces to acquire the power needed to fulfill the Reagan Administration's new military strategy.

That strategy calls on the military services to prepare for a protracted worldwide conflict with the Soviet Union with conventional arms under a revitalized nuclear shield. It emphasizes the projection of military power through expensive naval forces in particular. After the briefing, The Washington Post published an article outlining the briefing given the senior officials. The sources of the article were not identified.

Pentagon officials said Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger and Deputy Secretary Frank C. Carlucci were infuriated by the article. Mr. Weinberger, however, minimized the story in public, saying it was merely an accumulation of "wish lists" submitted

by the military services for new weapons, equipment and manpower.

Mr. Carlucci ordered an investigation that included polygraph, or lie detector, tests of all civilian and military officials who attended or might have had knowledge of the briefing. He led off himself and other high officials, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. David C. Jones.

That led to the notice of proposed dismissal to Mr. Tillson, who served as a captain in the Army in Vietnam and was twice decorated with silver stars for valor, according to his attorney. Mr. Tillson is a graduate of West Point and comes from a long line of professional soldiers.

Mr. Heller said that not only had Mr. Tillson denied the charges under oath but that the five Congressional officials and the former Pentagon official, Robert B. Pirie Jr., Mr. Korb's predecessor, had submitted sworn statements that they had not received the information from Mr. Tillson.

In an unusual move, The Washington Post reporter who wrote the article, George C. Wilson, wrote a letter to Mr. Weinberger stating that Mr. Tillson was not the source and that he was prepared to swear to that, Mr. Heller said.

In most cases, newspaper reporters decline to comment on unnamed sources.

The charges against Mr. Tillson also accuse him of giving deceptive answers in the polygraph test when asked whether he was the direct or indirect source of the information, Mr. Heller said. Mr. Tillson has denied that charge, he said.

According to the charges, Mr. Tillson admitted in an interview before the lie detector test that he had disclosed classified, or secret, information to unauthorized persons. Mr. Tillson, his attorney said, has denied that, asserting that the investigators either misunderstood or misheard him.

Under Defense Department procedure, the case has been sent either to Mr. Carlucci or to Mr. Weinberger for decision. Since Mr. Carlucci has been in effect the prosecutor on this case, Mr. Weinberger is believed to be the most likely one to make the decision. Mr. Tillson may also take the case to court if he is dissatisfied with the actions within the Pentagon.